The Crosman Family

Jennie Halliday and William Crosman
November 20th, 1918

Album 29
2006.45

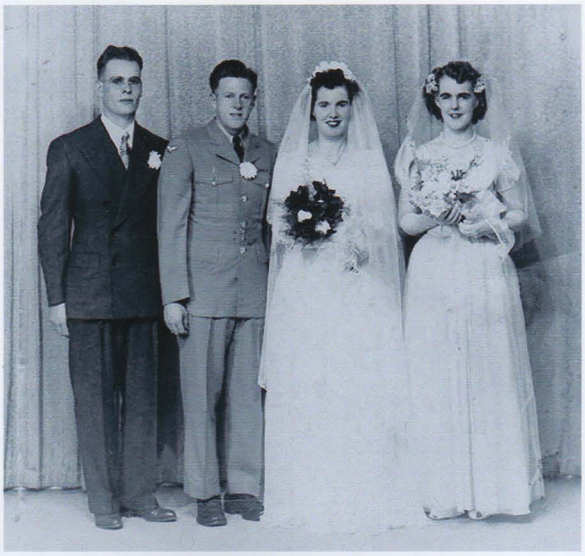
THE CROSMANS have most of their fun together, seldom go outside looking for amusement. In the foreground, William makes flies for his trout fishing and his wife knits. In the background, son Tommy, his wife Myrtle and their children, read, listen to the radio and look at funnies.

Mr. Crosman and Salvation Army Major on Victoria Road in front of Moraff's store in a deep discussion (probably about fishing).

Crosman Weddings

Jennie Halliday and William Crosman
November 20th, 1918

Tommie & Myrtle – Dec. 10, 1940



Norma & Clifford – Oct. 16, 1946

Harry & Anne – Jan. 8, 1947

Jean & Byron – Nov. 17, 1943

Anna & Gordon – Oct. 16, 1954

Christena & Stanley – June 6, 1955

Frances & John – Dec. 3, 1955

Helen & Leonard – Oct. 13, 1952

Meet Mr. And Mrs. Canada No. 2

This is the second in a series at articles about Canadian Families from coast to coast, the "average folks" in your Community.

THE CROSMANS

Sydney Steelworker and Family Are Neighborly, Steady People

Story by Kate Aitken Photos by Louis Jacques

MARITIMES-BORN William Crosman and his Cape Breton-born wife, Jennie, live with their family at the Pier, Victoria Road, Sydney. William, aged 49, is a general fitter in the Dosco steel plant. The family are solid, steady stock. The eldest children, twin boys of 26, enlisted in World War II; William has ribbons for service in World War I. Harry has elected to stay with the Navy; Tommy is in the Reserve Army, works with his father at the same bench in his last apprentice year, after which he will draw the same pay as his father.

William draws one of the higher rates of pay at the steel plant, ninety cents an hour. Just now the strike-bound Dosco plant is closed and William has leisure a-plenty. This year William's pay cheques will gross $2,300, his take-home pay after deductions about $1,945. The Crosman's rent is unusually low since William built his own apartment in the hall above landlord Moraff's store and installs improvements when needed. Food costs for the family (mother, dad and the seven of their ten children now at home) average $1,500 a year, with eggs at 59 cents a dozen, oranges at 55 cents a dozen, butter at 47 cents a pound, tea at 75 cents a pound. The Crosmans use one pound of tea a week, but drink no coffee; they use six quarts of milk daily, at 14 cents a quart. Three of the girls, Norma, 23, Anna, 18 and Margaret, 19, working as grocery clerks, each contribute five dollars weekly to the household; their mother does the girls' laundry.

The Crosman flat is heated with a furnace-ette and a kitchen stove, using 16 tons of local coal yearly, at a cost of approximately $110. The hot water comes from the kitchen range. The electric bill for lights, washer, toaster, radio, iron and hot plate is $3.50 weekly. The Crosman radio goes most of the day. William likes to hear the news, the children and their friends like dance music and turn the radio up as soon as they come in. Mrs. Crosman just likes to hear the radio going, doesn't pay much attention to it except for household hints – even them, she thinks some radio commentators have a lot to learn.

William has no insurance outside his benefit insurance at the plant. This costs him 70 cents a week, after ten years' payment gives him one thousand dollars in life insurance. In case of sickness the benefit provides $13 weekly for 13 weeks for any members of the family up to eighteen years of age; it also provides hospitalization. If the illness extends beyond 13 weeks a special grant may be obtained, but it is deducted from the thousand dollars of insurance. The Crosmans had tough luck last year. William was off work with sickness for four months, Mrs. Crosman was hospitalized at Halifax, daughter Helen was in Sydney Hospital. Even with his benefit William was set back $1,700. But in spite of this extra expense William has still $500 in bonds, owes not a cent in the world.

There is no phone in the Crosman house; necessary messages are relayed from Moraff's store below. There is no car either, as the family doesn't need one. Williams's hobbies include his fishing, his flute and fiddle, his pheasants and books. Mother Jennie loves a good movie; she wept buckets and thoroughly enjoyed "Mrs. Miniver" and the "The Bells of St. Mary's" but hasn't time for pictures unless they are the kind she likes. Her hobbies are her Victorian Order of Nurses Club and standing up to Dad for the girls; she laughingly admits that she has the best family in the world. The Crosmans read the Sydney Post-record and The Standard, Mrs. Crosman reads Good Housekeeping.

The Crosman flat is always filled with friends, was a veritable canteen during the war. On Christmas Day, 1944, no one knows how many servicemen ate dinner at the home; the Crosmans and guests ate their way through seventeen pounds of turkey and sixteen pounds of goose.

William Crosman reads, votes, and takes an avid interest in politics. Mother Jennie busy campaigning for gardens at the Pier; it would mean regulations to close in the cows, which now run loose and feast on the young gardens.

Here is a family that pays its way, eats, dresses, lives within its means and has time to be neighborly. The Crosman's main ambition is eventually to rent all the space over the store, have plenty of room for all the children. Sydney is their happy world, its harbor their far horizon.

Printed by the Montreal Standard Weekly newspaper in the summer of 1946, this article was the second in a series of articles on typical families in each province of Canada, starting in Newfoundland and ending in British Columbia.

AT HOME, William Crosman goes over his week's bills. When he is working, William makes ninety cents an hour, ordinarily works a 48-hour week. With weekly deductions for income tax, Victory bonds, sick benefit dues, union dues and insurance, his pay averages $37.41.

THIS was taken behind the Sydney Steel Plant; it's Mr. Crosman talking to some kids in the neighbourhood who are in the process of building something out of straw they have collected. Mr. Crosman is probably giving them advice as to how to build it.

STEAM FITTER in the strike-bound Dosco steel plant, William Crosman, 49, talks about conditions with Angus Tobin (Left) and Danny Curry. Angus worked in Dosco for 42 years, has been retired on a pension for two years and has seen five strikes come and go in his lifetime. Sydney, North Sydney and Glace Bay, all within a radius of twelve miles, have a population of 120,000 virtually all of who work in the steel plant or in the coal.

DIRECTOR Crosman and manager, Elgar Grieg, examine a four-week old pheasant at the Pheasant Preserve, maintained by the Cape Breton Fish and Game Protective Association. This fall the ten-week-old pheasants will be released in wilder parts of Cape Breton and district.

GETTING on the bus to go to church Sunday mornig. In order of appearance: Frances, Anna, Norma, Mom, Johnny and Dad.

EVERY SUNDAY, the family board a bus and ride three miles to Brookland St. Presbyterian Church. They think the long distance no hardship since the church is new and thoroughly Presbyterian. The mayor sits behind the Crosmans at church.

MRS. CROSMAN whips up a pan of biscuits for dinner. Today's dinner includes potatoes and carrots with steak, lettuce salad and apple pie. The Crosmans have no garden, no storage for canned goods and with seven healthy children at home, they eat $28. worth of food weekly.

SUNDAY morning, everyone goes to church. The Crosmans live in a flat over the Moraff store shown here. The apartment was a Pentecostal Hall when William took it over. Landlord Moraff provided lumber and tenant Crosman divided the hall into a comfortable seven-roomed apartment. Monthly rent for this is $20.00

AFTER DINNER on Sunday, William and Jennie Crosman stroll on Sydney's famous Esplanade. Sydney harbour is landlocked and beautiful; from it sailed some of the war's largest convoys. The Crosmans, with ten thousand others, live in the Pier district, the area surrounding Whitney Pier,the main Dosco dock.

THE VICTORIA ORDER of Nurses Mother's Club gathers in the Crosman living room for their regular meeting. The Club is friendly, casual and neighbourly. The women knit, sew, gossip and enjoy themselves. They talk over the strike at the plant and all favour the strike to set a minimum wage for the men.

MOTHER of twelve children, ten of whom are living, Mrs. Crosman assists the VON nurse, Miss Dobbins, weekly at the Well Baby Clinic. Fifty to fifty-five babies is the average attendance each week at the clinic.

WASHING is done three times a week at the Crosman home. Mrs. Crosman has an electric washer and heater in coal stove. She makes all sheets and tablecloths from empty flour and sugar sacks.

DAUGHTERS Norma, 23, Anna, 18, Frances, 15 and 11-year-old Helen go swimming at the local beach. Norma, Margaret (away on holidays) and Anna all clerk in grocery stores, are paying $5.00 a week for board. The girls love dancing, would go every night, if permitted.

NORMA and Anna get ready to go out dancing, while Helen teases them.

This picture of Norma and her fiancé, Johnny Johnson, was taken at the Imperial Hall where the Crosman girls like to go dancing whenever possible.

A FAMILY with seven children at home means expert shopping. Grocery man Jake Perlin shows Mrs. Crosman a leg of lamb and gives her special attention since daughter Norma clerks in the store.

ARDENT FISHERMAN, Mr. Crosman and his son, Tommy, go trout fishing late Sunday afternoon. Both wear waders, use rods and flies made by William. Brought up in a strict church house, William doesn't like card-playing on Sunday but sees no objection to any one fishing. He contributes $1.75 a week to the church.